

John Robinson

Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers

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JOHN ROBINSON, PASTOR OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS.

No sufficient biographical sketch of John Robinson has been written. The general scope of his influence has been defined, but there is yet lacking a careful study of his development and personality. To lay the basis in these respects for a discriminating biography is the purpose of this dissertation.

The sources and literature quoted in the following pages are these :

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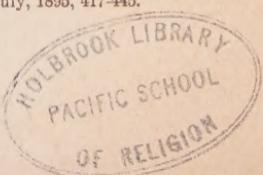
PURITAN BEGINNINGS.

With the accession of Edward VI to the English throne, in 1547, the small Protestant party that had emerged into view during the reign of Henry VIII, came into power.¹ From the beginning of this reign appeared a deliberate attempt to rid England of Roman Catholic doctrine as well as of papal ecclesiastical supremacy.² In January, 1549, Parliament confirmed the prayer-book, which had been prepared on the basis of such Roman missals as that of Sarum.³ A point of seemingly minor importance in this service-book was the retention of the priestly vestments. This matter became a watch-word with men whose tendencies were toward a completer separation from Rome in every respect, and the Puritan movement was destined to

¹ Neal, *History of Puritans*, i, 44.

² See documentary proofs in Nicholas Pocock, *The Condition of Morals and Religious Beliefs in the Reign of Edward VI*. ENGLISH HISTORICAL REVIEW, July, 1895, 417-445.

³ Neal, *History of Puritans*, i, 47.



crystallize about this point. It first took shape in the objections of Hooper to the vestments (1549). An increasing number of reforming clergy came quickly to accord with him.

Meantime there was a definite attempt made at doctrinal statement by the Protestant party.¹ Forty-two Articles of Faith received the royal sanction in 1551; these subsequently became the thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican church.² But this doctrinal change was carried out during the minority of the King, generally without the consent of either Parliament or Convocation, and rested upon most insecure foundations. The people were not ready for it, and the death of the King put an end to the attempt.

A violent Roman Catholic reaction began when Mary was crowned Queen, October 1, 1553. It seemed completely triumphant in spite of a few secret congregations that maintained a Protestant worship. Nominally the national religion was restored to that of the last days of Henry VIII; practically it was a complete return to the papal system. Heretics were driven into exile, imprisoned, and slain. The real line of development which we must follow is from those ardent leaders who were seeking a more perfect reform under Edward VI, and which attempt was checked by the young monarch's death, through the Marian exiles in Continental cities, to the religious policy of Elizabeth, in the execution of which these returned exiles played a most important part. Following this line, we find ourselves concerned chiefly with a community at Frankfurt am Main, who had settled there in 1554, and had been allowed by the local authorities to maintain their own form of worship. They did not, however, conform to the ritual of Edward VI, but used no surplice in their worship, dispensed with the litany, and allowed the people to make no replies after the minister.³ The results of this action lie before us in a small book⁴ issued later by them. The changes which they had made did not meet the approval of their fellow-exiles in Strasburg and Zürich, and the latter urged their Frankfurt brethren to adhere strictly to the order of worship enjoined by King Edward. This counsel was rejected, and, in defense of their action, the Frankfurt brethren said :

¹ *Ditto*, 51-54. ² *Ibid.* ³ *Ditto*, i, 66.

⁴ *A Brief Discours off the troubles begonne at Franckford in Germany, etc.*, MDLXXV.

"If any think that the not using the book in all points should weaken our godly fathers' and brethren's hands, or be a disgrace to the worthy laws of King Edward, let them consider that they have altered many things in it heretofore, and if God had not in these wicked days otherwise determined, would hereafter have altered more; and in our case we doubt not but they would have done as we do."¹

It was indeed known that Cranmer had drawn up a form of common-prayer "much more perfect," but the condition of the clergy made it impossible to carry it out.² Thus the general movement toward reform was maintained during the Roman Catholic supremacy, and made progress abroad under the impetus already gained in the reign of Edward, and from the Continental reformers.

With the accession of Elizabeth the religious status of the realm was subjected to another change. The determining word for the religious policy of the Queen herself is compromise.³ Elizabeth was a Roman Catholic by inclination, and an Anglican by policy. She chose to be the head of a national church, which should be neither so Protestant that it would repel her Roman Catholic subjects, nor so Roman that the Protestants in the kingdom would be unable to become its members. To this end she employed many of the returned exiles as her ecclesiastical ministers, who, under their sovereign's eye, would scarcely carry reformation too far, but whose name would help to appease the demands of all who were zealous for reform.

The new organization was effected by the renewal of the Act of Supremacy, which was generally enforced; by the passage of the Act of Uniformity in 1559, which was also generally obeyed;⁴ and by the re-enactment of the thirty-nine Articles (1562), which met no opposition.

But Elizabeth's system was one which could never afford satisfaction. It undoubtedly offered favorable conditions for the development of the popular mind into a more thoroughly Protestant attitude; but when that point had been reached the new organization was not elastic enough to yield. The first

¹ Neal, *History of Puritans*, i, 67.

² Ditto, 68.

³ The instruction of Elizabeth to her committee appointed to revise the prayer-book of King Edward was: "To strike out all offensive passages against the Pope, and to make people easy about the belief in the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament." Neal, i: 76.

⁴ Most of the inferior beneficed clergy kept their places under this test. Neal estimates that out of 9,400 only 243 failed to comply. (i: 82.)

opposition came, naturally, from bishops such as Parker and Jewell, who either thoroughly ignored or opposed the use of the vestments. At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign there are three parties visible: (1) The Roman Catholic party, decreasing in size. (2) The compromise Anglican party of the Queen, at first supreme, but later failing to satisfy the growing demand for reform. (3) The Reform party, now known as Puritans, increasing slowly in strength, and embracing the radical elements in the kingdom. The contest between the last two in its initial stages forms the first period of the Puritan movement.

THE ORIGIN OF SEPARATION.

A still more fundamental examination of the constitution of the Anglican church was bound to come, and this was entered upon by the Puritans in the second stage of their development, under the lead of Thomas Cartwright.

Cartwright was a follower of Calvin both in dogma and in polity. He lost his position as Divinity Professor at Cambridge in 1571 as a result of his opinions expressed against the Anglican system. He held that the Scriptures teach an authoritative system of polity, of which the diocesan episcopate forms no part; that excommunication should be used more freely; that members of the church should have a share in the selection of their ministers. He also maintained the doctrine of a national church, of which all the baptized inhabitants of England not excommunicate were *ipso facto* members; this membership the clergy were to train to holiness of life; the magistrate was to suppress heresy and compel to uniformity; the true reformer was to remain within the Anglican church, working for its purification; separation from it was schism and grave sin. This outlined the policy of the Presbyterian Puritan party until the civil war.¹

The two parties carried on a vigorous contest, and Anglican views of the episcopate grew more intense under the stress of opposition. On the other hand, the Puritans were the victims of increasing persecution at the hands of the dominant party.²

¹ See Neal, *History of Puritans*, i: 74, and Walker, *History of Cong.*, 19ff.

² In 1620 Robinson wrote: "No man is ignorant what care the two great factions in the church, that of the prelates and the other of the reformists, do take . . . how each may subvert and root out the other." *Works*, ii: 365.

But there were certain points in the teachings of Cartwright which were likely to make his system merely a school in which zealous men would be trained for farther advance.¹ For his church was national in character, and all reform must be waited for at the hands of the civil magistrates.

There were also in England many Anabaptists. Their teachings, perhaps, exerted some influence on Robert Browne, but even this cannot be clearly shown. On the other hand, the principles of the two bodies differ so essentially that, as a whole, they appear independent of each other, and correspond only because they are the common expression of the general attempt at a more earnest religious life, and a return to the Scriptures.²

Passing by certain obscure, incipient movements about London in the vicinity of the year 1567, we find the Separatist idea coming to its first full expression in the writings and work of the much-maligned, erratic Robert Browne (cir. 1550-cir. 1633).³ It was while pastor of a church of Puritan tendencies, about 1580, that he seems to have become convinced that the Puritan reformation had not gone far enough, and that a radical separation without waiting longer for help either from the impotent magistrate, or from the sad minority of faithful clergy, was the only possible means of reforming the church and avoiding personal sin. Browne thus uttered his practical protest in the form of a principle, to the effect that the sin of the bishops in maintaining an unscriptural church order, and in hindering efforts to reform the same, became by participation the sin of all ministers and members remaining within the false order. This is the principle that became so potent later under the general designation, Connivancy at Sin. In 1582 Browne sent out two important treatises,⁴ in which his general system of polity was displayed. We may sum this up under three heads:

First. A Christian church is a company of persons possessing

¹ Robinson could say rightly of Cartwright, that he had opened a door by which Robinson must enter even if Cartwright did not. See *Works*, ii. 82.

² See, on the other hand, W. E. Griffis, *The Anabaptists*, THE NEW WORLD, Dec., 1895, (reprint, p. 10), who holds the "direct derivation" of the Congregationalists from the Anabaptists.

³ See Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 83ff., who places Browne as the virtual founder of Congregationalism. Against him, Brown, *Pilgrim Fathers*, 31.

⁴ *A Treatise of Reformation without tarrying for anie*, etc., by R. Browne. Middleburgh, 1582.

A Booke which Sheweth the lives and manners of all true Christians, etc., by R. Browne. Middleburgh, 1582.

Christian character, united to each other and to God in the bonds of a covenant. To each of these churches are given all the powers necessary for self-organization, government, and discipline. This church is a democracy under the immediate and absolute headship of Christ. Each member is responsible for the welfare of the church to which he belongs. Second. But churches also have mutual responsibilities for counsel and aid. This serves as an inter-ecclesiastical bond to unite the independent units. Third. The church and state are entirely independent of each other; hence civil magistrates have no right to exercise lordship in spiritual things.

These opinions were so radical that they called out a proclamation in the name of Queen Elizabeth against the books, and the possession and circulation of them was serious enough charge to result in the execution of two men¹ found guilty of it in 1583. But Browne's work was practically overthrown by his personal incapacity as a leader. He returned into the Anglican church, and died in prison an aged and despised man.²

The results of his writing began to appear in what was now opprobriously termed "Brownism" as represented by two men, Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood. We pass now to the second stage of the Separatist movement, and from Eastern England to London. In 1586 Barrowe and Greenwood were both arrested, and confined more or less closely until their execution together in 1593. During this time they, nevertheless, managed to prepare enough manuscript to occupy over 900 printed pages of controversial and exegetical literature. In this lies a new statement of the general principles of Browne. The radical ideas of the latter are mitigated. The attack upon the Anglican communion, polity, and worship is of the same nature as Browne's had been. But the new cast is aristocratic, and not democratic. The government of the individual congregation is placed almost entirely in the hands of the rulers of the congregation; the officers become the church. The power, indeed, remains with the church;³ but practically the eldership assumes gradually the place of undisputed pre-eminence.

Concerning the various attempts to realize these theories in

¹ Copyn and Thacker. See Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 209.

² The character of Browne received just treatment for the first time in Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 61-128.

³ Hanbury, *Hist. Memorials*, i: 58.

practice at home and abroad, it is not necessary to state more than that they were unsuccessful. Men paid with their lives the price of their opinions ; but the leaders and congregations lacked the necessary force of personal character to bring things successfully to pass. At the close of the sixteenth century it was apparent that, unless more patient and judicious leaders should succeed Browne and Barrowe, their opinions could not survive. The force of a really strong personality had not yet been brought to bear upon the realization of the Separatist ideal. Such a contact of a judicious leader with a Separatist congregation might form a third period of its history. This came to pass in the North of England, in the neighborhood of Gainsborough-on-Trent, when a small Separatist congregation there was joined by John Robinson.

ROBINSON'S LIFE.

Robinson left no autobiography ; the personal element in his writings is relatively small ; and the references to him by his contemporaries do not furnish details concerning his life. The date of his birth is determined by an entry¹ in the records of Leyden University as follows :

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1615 | Joannes Robintsonus Anglus |
| Sept. 5 | Ann. xxxix. |
| Coss. permisu. | Stud. Theol. alit Familiam. |

This enables us to fix upon the year 1575-76 as that of his birth. He seems to have been born in the county of Lincolnshire, but of this there is no safe evidence. His connection with the Separatists of Gainsborough-on-Trent lends some force to the conjecture² that this was also the town of his birth. Of his childhood³ and early life we know nothing. We are also uninformed as to the social character of his family, and the early education that he received. The general inference to be drawn from his means of livelihood, and his financial enterprises in Leyden is that he was not from the poorer classes.

Robinson first appears in contemporary records on the rolls

¹ Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 360, note.

² Made by Hunter (*Collections*, 93). But there is little ground for it. The Gainsborough parish records furnish only a negative result ; they are illegible.

³ Dexter attempts (*Cong. as Seen*, 360) to establish from Robinson's *Essays* that he was trained by his grandparents. But the passages bear no trace of personal reminiscence ; there are general observations concerning the training of children.

of Corpus Christi (Benet) College at the time he entered the University of Cambridge. The record is as follows:

John Robinson, F. Lincsh, admitted 1592, Fell. 1598.

This would make Robinson a student at Cambridge at the age of 16-17. Corpus Christi was one of the smaller of the Cambridge colleges, had, perhaps, 110 members inclusive of instructors, and it is significant that no less than three pioneer Separatists had been students there, viz.: Robert Browne,¹ his co-laborer, Harrison,² and John Greenwood.³

The entire University had become filled with the Puritan teachings which Cartwright had advocated, and during Robinson's student days it was necessary for the Vice-Chancellor to officially deny that a presbytery had been formed in St. John's College.⁴ Robinson received his degree at Cambridge,⁵ and was appointed Fellow in 1598. Immediately after this he went evidently to Norwich or its vicinity,⁶ where he labored, probably in the capacity of a curate,⁷ until about 1604, when he was suspended by his Bishop, Jegon, formerly Master of Corpus Christi College. He then went leisurely to Cambridge, where he spent some time in discussion and thought,⁸ and finally, resigning his Fellowship, he went to Gainsborough-on-Trent,⁹ where he united himself as a Separatist with a congregation that had been gathered there under John Smyth. So much seems clear concerning the external history of Robinson's movements up to this time. We must now seek to determine, so far as possible, the steps by which he reached his first position as a Separatist.

¹ Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 64. ² Walker, *History*, 35. ³ *Ditto*, 42.

⁴ *Lansdowne MSS.*, lxiii: 92, in Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 369.

⁵ Hall wrote to Robinson: "You have twice kneeled to our Vice-Chancellor when you were admitted to your degree." In Hanbury, *Historical Memorials*, i: 195.

⁶ Robinson retained a warm affection for his Norwich friends. One of his books is inscribed, "To my Christian Friends in Norwich and thereabouts. . . . That loving and grateful remembrance in which I always have you provoketh me to rejoice greatly when I understand that your souls do prosper." *People's Plea in Works*, iii, 285, 287.

⁷ Ainsworth in his *Counterpoysen* (145) speaks of Robinson as having formerly had "the care of their sowles," who went to hear him preach after his suspension. See Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 373.

⁸ "Coming to Cambridge (as to other places where I hoped most to find satisfaction to my troubled heart) I went the forenoon to Mr. Cha[dderton] his exercise In the afternoon I went to hear Mr. B[ayne], the successor of Mr. Perkins." Robinson, *Manumission* [MS. copy].

⁹ Hall, *Apologie*, says: "When you went from Norwich to Lincolnshire after your suspension," (115). Hanbury, *Historical Memorials*, i: 198, n.

If Robinson came from the vicinity of Gainsborough-on-Trent, he had spent his early days in a region where religious opinion had always been of a pronounced type. The neighborhood had been filled with the monasteries of the conspicuous religious orders previous to the suppressions under Henry VIII; later the Puritan preachers were active there;¹ and it is a remarkable fact that from three small villages within a few miles of each other came pioneer leaders of three great non-conformist bodies.²

Young Robinson was, on entering the University, a member by birth of the state church. His conversion took place before he separated from it. This change seems to have been a matter of intense personal conviction to him. He describes³ it in the terms of that Calvinistic theology which then obtained in the Anglican church, and to which Robinson through all his life maintained unswerving allegiance. When the break came, it was not a question of dogma, but an issue of practical life and polity, which formed the pivot on which he swung free from the Anglican communion. So far as we can trace this influence to any one source, it is to a representative of the Puritan tendencies of the University, William Perkins, of Christ's College and St. Andrew's. Robinson nowhere asserts the definite influence of Perkins upon him; but he often writes⁴ so that the strong formative influence of the Puritan preacher upon the University student is apparent. The pupil went beyond his master, to whom he owed his initial incentive.

Another element entered into the developmental forces acting upon Robinson, and prevented him from becoming the mere follower of one teacher or teaching. This was his constant sense of the sufficiency and authority of the Scriptures.⁵ When his attention was first drawn to the teachings of the Separatist

¹ Brown, *Pilgrim Fathers*, 75, 76.

² Congregationalists represented by Robinson and Brewster of Scrooby; English Baptists, by Helwisse of Gainsborough; Methodists by the Wesleys of Epworth.

³ "We do with all thankfulness to our God acknowledge, and with much comfort remember, those lively feelings of God's love, and former graces wrought in us, and that one special grace amongst the rest by which we have been enabled to draw ourselves into visible covenant and holy communion. Yea, with such comfort and assurance do we call to mind the Lord's work of old this way in us, as we doubt not but our salvation was sealed up unto our consciences, by most infallible marks and testimonies, which could not deceive, before we conceived the least thought of separation." *Works*, ii: 64-65. See also p. 75.

⁴ "[Mr. Perkins], of great account, and that worthily, with all that fear God, however he were against us in our practice." See *Works*, i: 468, ii: 446, iii: 61.

⁵ See *Works*, i: 43-52.

writers by means of some of their books,¹ Robinson at first held to his former position of a conforming Puritan. But later he abandoned this policy, went to the Scriptures as the source of final appeal,² not pinning his faith "upon the sleeves of the most learned."³

These forces were at work in a mind of a pre-eminently practical cast, distrustful of itself, not quick at conclusions, but wresting truth as from a foe at the cost of agony.

His final decision was not reached until after the period of his work about Norwich. He seems to have left Cambridge a loyal enough member of the state church to allow of conformity to its usages, and probably of ordination at the hands of a bishop.⁴ His desire was to preach; religion was a matter of life, and the attainment of personal righteousness the end of religious effort. And now came the practical point about which his new opinion was to gather. He saw the *absolute contradiction between the church as the communion of the elect and the parish church.*⁵ His personal allegiance to his former teachings could not hold when he finally began to "search the Scriptures." From this court of final appeal he emerged a Separatist.

But Robinson did not move hastily. There was none of the rashness about him which characterized his contemporary, John Smyth. When Robinson was suspended for his utterances, he sought another position where he might express his opinions and yet remain a conforming member of the state church.⁶ But here he was unsuccessful. He refused finally to conform. Meantime the Hampden Court Conference outlined the imperial policy of pitiless opposition to the Puritans;⁷ convocation intensified its canons; and with a "troubled heart" Robinson went to Cambridge, and thence to the Gainsborough congregation. We must now follow the history of a branch of this to a new home in Holland.

¹ "A long time before I entered this way, I took some taste of the truth in it by some treatises published in justification of it, which, the Lord knoweth, were sweet as honey unto my mouth." *Works*, ii: 51.

² "Even of late times, when I had entered into a more serious consideration of these things, and, according to the measure of grace received, searched the Scriptures whether they were so or no, and by searching found much light of truth." *Works*, ii: 52.

³ *Works*, ii: 87.

⁴ "We here of the separation (who have, as Mr. B[ernard] truly answers Mr. Smyth, renounced our ministry received from the bishops, and do exercise another by the people's choice," etc. *Works*, ii: 405.

⁵ *Ditto*, ii: 338, 389.

⁶ "A Mastership of the Hospital at Norwich," according to Hall in his *Apologie*. See Hanbury, *Historical Memorials*, i: 203.

⁷ This must have shown Robinson that further delay would be useless.

It was probably in the year 1602, that a Separatist congregation was formed from a company of small farmers at Gainsborough-on-Trent. They covenanted together "to walke in all His wayes made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."¹ Their leader was John Smyth, a man of a good deal of native ability, described as a good preacher, but tending to go to extremes, and laying undue emphasis on the more radical and revolutionary elements of the New Testament.² John Robinson became associated with this congregation in 1604, probably in no official capacity. What his visible means of support were during this time we do not know. For a year and a half, however, he seems to have been closely associated with Smyth, to whose influence upon him he himself confesses.³

Persecution began to increase; and the principle seems to have been already evolved, that a church should not be composed of more members than could meet together at one time. Hence, as the members were separated by a distance of some miles, and Postmaster William Brewster of Scrooby was able to offer a part of the congregation a place for worship in the manor house there, a division by mutual consent took place in 1606. The Gainsborough section emigrated to Amsterdam probably in the same year; the Scrooby congregation was organized probably with Robinson as its pastor,⁴ Richard Clifton as teacher, and William Brewster as elder.

But the Scrooby congregation was not left to pursue its way unmolested. Plans for emigration to avoid continued persecution were begun late in 1607, and during the period from April to August, 1608, the majority of the congregation reached Amsterdam.

In Amsterdam they found two congregations of English Separatists, the London Church, under the leadership of Johnson and Ainsworth, between whom a sharp conflict was about to

¹ According to Bradford. The formula became typical.

² See Dexter's, *The True Story of John Smyth*, 1881.

³ Robinson, *Works*, iii: 103.

⁴ The question as to whether Robinson was the *first* pastor of the Scrooby congregation or not is reasonably determined. Clifton has been thought by some to have held this office first. (See Morton Dexter, *The Story of the Pilgrims*, 1894, 80.) But from the words of Robinson himself (*Works*, iii, 103); the address of Hall to Smyth and Robinson as of equal rank (Hanbury, *Historical Memorials*, i: 185); and from Bradford's description of the emigration to Holland (*History*, 16), the position taken above seems reasonably established.

begin, that would end in the rupture of the congregation, and the brethren from Gainsborough, whose ranks were immediately to be broken by contention. This was an atmosphere utterly uncongenial to Robinson. He had one hundred members with him, and their petition to immigrate was granted by the authorities of the city of Leyden, on Feb. 12, 1609. In the following May, the congregation reached its new home.

Here, for sixteen years, Robinson did his work as pastor, organizer, and controversialist. His first preserved booklet was put out during his Amsterdam sojourn, and he was probably in the midst of his largest work when he reached Leyden. These show us that his development from 1604, had been along the line of Barrowe's type of teaching. He tended toward an intenser emphasis upon the necessity of absolute separation from the Anglican church even to the smallest matter of fellowship and communion.

When Robinson reached Leyden, he found at last a place of residence that was congenial,¹ for the great University at that time outranked his own *alma mater*, and there were three large reformed churches in the city. It was also possible there, for the personality of the pastor to work upon his people, unhindered by the persecutions in England or the vagaries in Amsterdam. He was a young man of 35 years, ready for action and achievement. The members of the congregation were poor and obliged to be content with humble work. In 1611, Robinson and three others purchased a desirable property near the Pieter's Kerk, at a price equivalent in modern American currency to \$10,000—\$12,000. This became the center of all the peculiarly church life of the congregation, which seems never to have taken on any communal aspect. There is no trace of the socialistic tendencies in Robinson's church which played such havoc among the Anabaptists. The congregation increased from one to three hundred members before 1620,² and was acknowledged by the city magistrates³ as a body of honest men.

Meantime Robinson's counsel was sought in church matters. The storm broke at Amsterdam, and his advice and mediation

¹ Robinson never became expatriated. He loved England, he remained loyal to his king, he longed for home till the last. See *Works*, ii, 37 and often.

² Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 389.

³ "These English have lived among us now this twelve years, and yet we never had any suit or accusation come against any of them." See Dexter, *Ditto*, 390.

were in frequent demand. Moderation, peace, and forbearance are the keynotes to his replies so far as we have them preserved.¹ Also Robinson's advice and friendship were sought by English reformers who were not Separatists. He was in close communication with the "learned Ames," who probably influenced him greatly. And still more important was his contact with Henry Jacob, whom Robinson brought to a full acceptance of the Leyden church's system of polity, and who established in England in 1616 the first permanent independent church on the Leyden model.²

Robinson was also busy in dogmatic discussion. He became immatriculated as a student of theology in the University in 1615. The atmosphere was sultry with the continuation of the great Gomar-Arminius controversy, which had a political as well as a theological significance. Robinson held a public dispute³ with Episcopius, the successor of Arminius, in the Academy at Leyden, which shows that he held a worthy position among the learned men of the city.

But it soon became apparent, that in spite of a gratifying growth and slight prosperity, Robinson's congregation could hope for nothing beyond final absorption into the ranks of the Dutch reformed churches. The struggle for existence was a hard one, for the exiles were farmers and ill-adapted to city life. The young men were entering the army or going to sea. Robinson particularly deplored the influence of the continental Sunday upon his flock. But more than all, his evangelistic spirit demanded room for freer development. This led to the conception of a plan for emigration to America. It was not without precedent. And so, as early as 1616, Robinson arranged seasons of fasting and prayer, preached on the special duties involved in such a movement, and with Brewster, Carver, and Cushman, set forward the enterprise in England. The difficulties in the way were enormous, but Robinson appears during these four years of business transactions until 1620, as an indomitable organizer.⁴

¹ *Works*, iii: 466-486. ² See Neal, *History of Puritans*, i: 244.

³ "The Lord did so help him to defend the truth and foil this adversary, as he put him to an apparent non-plus, in this great and public audience. And the like he did a second or third time upon such like occasions. The which as it caused many to praise God that the truth had so famous victory, so it procured him much honour and respect from those learned men which loved the truth." Bradford, *Hist.*, 21.

⁴ The sources are chiefly Bradford and Winslow. Also important letters are gathered in Robinson, *Works*, iii: 486 ff.

When the departure came, Robinson remained behind with the aged and weaker members, hoping soon to follow the emigrants. But he never reached America. His death came suddenly, and he was buried on the fourth of March, 1625.

To sketch the development of Robinson's thought after he reached Leyden, and to display his main teachings, requires a careful study of his literary remains, which we shall now undertake.

ROBINSON'S CONTROVERSIES.

I. With Joseph Hall concerning Separation, 1608.

Sources:

1. *Letter to M. Smith and M. Rob[inson], Ringleaders of the late Separation at Amsterdam*, by Joseph Hall.

The original is not preserved but was reprinted in

2. *An Answer to a Censorious Epistle* by John Robinson [1609]. This is also lost, but is contained in full in

3. *A Common Apologie of the Ch. of England etc.*, by J. Hall, 1610, 4° vi-145-iv. Reprinted in Hall, *Works*, ix: 379. Extracts from all three in Hanbury, *Hist. Memorials*, i: 185-204. Nos. 1 and 2 in Robinson, *Works*, iii: 397-420.

Robinson first appears as a controversialist, in replying to a bitter personal attack upon him by Joseph Hall. The latter had been a student at Cambridge when Robinson was there, entered the Anglican church, and became Bishop of Exeter and Norwich. His attack represents the official, uncompromising opposition of the Anglican clergy to the Separatists.

The final test of every argument, Robinson makes the Scriptures. He formulates no theory of inspiration but takes it for granted that the perfect,¹ unchangeable² Scriptures are the court of final appeal.³ Not only are the commands of Scripture obligatory, but that which is not commanded in Scripture is necessarily accursed and abominable.⁴ Hence, the New Testament not only prescribes the matter of faith, but lays down the order of the church as well.⁵

The ground of the Separation is not the ceremonies.⁶ The real ground is the corruptions of the state church.⁷ For every true church must be separated from sin and the world unto holiness and God.⁸ That separation the Anglican church has not made and does not make; hence, it is no true church. Robinson brings these corruptions forward in a series of charges,⁹ from which it appears that they are, with one or two exceptions, to be

¹ *Works*, iii: 406.

² *Ditto*, 412.

³ *Ditto*, 420.

⁴ *Ditto*, 411.

⁵ *Ditto*, 407.

⁶ *Ditto*, 402.

⁷ *Ditto*, 415.

⁸ *Ditto*, 406.

⁹ *Ditto*, 410.

included under polity and not doctrine. These may be distributed under the two heads, membership and government. The errors in the Anglican church are not like the corruptions in Corinth or the "wafers" of Geneva.¹ The latter could, by virtue of their church government, be reformed, the former not only are not, but *cannot* be reformed under the Anglican constitution.² The parishes do not admit of purification ; hence, they cannot be true churches.³

Here Robinson differentiates at a stroke his position from that of conforming Puritans, who based their objection to the Anglican church on its retention of ceremonies, "having mystical significations in them."⁴ He brings the whole fabric of the Anglican church up to the light of the Apostolic model, and shows how one who is eager for reform can only despair at the impossibility of it under a false church order.

Also he differs from Ainsworth,⁵ who had said that the separation was from the corruptions of the Anglican church, but not from the church itself. Robinson sees an essential unity between the church and its errors and cuts free from both.

But for a fuller statement of separation we must pass to another debate.

II. With Richard Bernard concerning Separation. 1610.

Sources :

1. *Christian Advertisements and Counsels of Peace*, by R. Bernard, 1608, 16°, xvi—200. See Hanbury, *Hist. Memorials*, i: 204-216, for parts. This was answered by

2. *Counterpoison*, by H[enry] A[insworth], 1608. See Hanbury, i: 174, ff. And No. 1 was also answered by

3. *Parallels, Censures, and Observations*, by John Smyth, 1610. See Hanbury, i: 179. Against 2 and 3 was issued.

4. *Plain Evidences: directed against Mr. Ainsworth the Separatist and Mr. Smyth, the se-Baptist*. By Richard Bernard, 1610.

When this appeared, John Robinson had partly completed a reply to No. 1, which pre-supposes also the issue of Nos. 2 and 3. He now issued, using also in the latter part of the new book the arguments of No. 4, his,

5. *A Justification of Separation from the Church of England. Against Mr. Richard Bernard his invective entitled The Separatists, Schism*, by John Robinson, 1610, 4°, 483. Reprinted 1639. Also in *Works*, vol. ii. See Hanbury, i: 204 ff.

Richard Bernard⁶ was a representative vicar; his parish was near Scrooby, in Worksop,⁷ Nottinghamshire. He was an extreme Puritan; had passed through severe, personal religious struggle ;⁸ was silenced by the Archbishop, but, on consideration,

¹ *Ditto*, 417.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ditto*, 416.

⁴ Neal, *History of Puritans*, i: 37.

⁵ *Counterpoison*, 2. See Hanbury, *Hist. Memorials*, i: 58.

⁶ See an excellent biographical sketch in Brown, *Pilgrim Fathers*, 78-85.

Smyth, *Parallels*, etc., 5. ⁸ Robinson, *Works*, ii, 9, 91.

conformed and subscribed.¹ He was a personal acquaintance of Robinson²; he had known of the difficulties and results of the Scrooby emigration³; he had at one time even established a sort of Separatist congregation.⁴ His scholarship was good, and he appears as sincere, though somewhat vacillating.

Robinson's reply, in comparison with those which Symth and Ainsworth had already put out, is more judicious, more carefully reasoned, and freer from invective and personal abuse. It is not, however, an excellent piece of logic, for it follows the order of the arguments which it seeks to answer, and, during the latter half, wavers in the attempt to follow the line of two books instead of one. It is Robinson's largest work. There is very little in it which is original with the author except in the complete and reasoned statement that it makes of Separatist ideas, already expressed. It is the work of an advocate.

The great lines of the argument are summarily as follows: Robinson presses to the front at once the doctrine of Scripture authority.⁵ Bernard does the same;⁶ but Robinson passes far beyond him in insisting upon the literal and absolute character of the Word as obligatory.⁷ The charge of perversion of Scripture is a favorite one with both parties.⁸ The individual is perfectly able to interpret Scripture; its teachings are plain;⁹ anyone who searches it cannot be deceived.¹⁰ Robinson has certain general rules of exegesis,¹¹ but his general method is that of simple, literal interpretation. But the Scripture not only teaches dogma; it prescribes a polity,¹² which is a part of the New Testament, an object of faith, an element of right doctrine. Polity is not to be determined according to the nature of surrounding conditions; but the infallible Apostles, by direction and decree of the Holy Ghost, established for all time one recognizable polity which is absolutely obligatory.¹³ Thus Robinson reaches the extreme of insistence upon the idea that a church constitution is taught in the New Testament.¹⁴

The grounds of the separation occupy, naturally, the body of

¹ Smyth, as above, and Hunter, *Collections*, 38.

² Robinson, *Works*, ii, 9 and often.

³ *Ditto*, 76, 82. ⁴ *Ditto*, 101.

⁵ N. B. When numbers alone are given in foot-notes in this section they refer to *Works*, vol. ii.

⁶ 20 and often. ⁷ 94. ⁸ 33, 35. ⁹ 6, 9, 45, 49. ¹⁰ 49. ¹¹ 46.

¹¹ 33 ff., 48, vol. i, 47-51. ¹² 34. ¹³ 209.

¹⁴ Robinson was not consistent in carrying this out in his own congregation. Communism was not practiced (Acts 2: 44), nor were the officers those of the New Testament church. (See *Works*, iii, 429.)

the discussion. They are represented by Robinson under the head of two principles, namely: Separation from that which is essentially false in church order is an absolute obligation resting upon every Christian, and The principle of participation in guilt (connivancy at sin) renders all communion with the false state church a sin.

We will follow, first, Robinson's attack upon the Anglican church, for it is out of this that his own theory is to be constructed most clearly.

The membership of the state church, Robinson maintains, is not holy.¹ Sins may, indeed, exist among the members of a church, and the church yet remain a true one;² but when, by nature of its organization, the church is powerless to purify itself, it becomes thereby false.³ This is the condition of the Anglican church; the persistent unholiness of its membership is proof of it.⁴ Brought up to the Scripture standard, the falsity of the state church is self-evident. It does not even correspond to the separated church of Israel;⁵ it lacks a covenant;⁶ it fails utterly, also, to meet the New Testament model.⁷ The Anglican state church is also shown to be false from a comparison of it with the reformed churches.⁸ The history of the Anglican church's origin proves the same point; its parishes were transformed forcibly, but no profession of faith was required of individuals under the changes in Henry's,⁹ Edward's,¹⁰ Mary's,¹¹ or Elizabeth's¹² reign. The unholy character of the parish churches, admitted by the Anglicans,¹³ confessed to by Bernard,¹⁴ personally known by Robinson,¹⁵ is persistent and hopeless. The ministry, too, is degenerate,¹⁶ better able to handle cards on an ale-bench than to preach the gospel.¹⁷ And in this respect, also, the An-

¹ 213, 257, 364. ² 88. ³ 259.

⁴ Here is the difference between Puritan and Separatist. The former recognized Anglican *impurity*; the Separatist saw therein *falsity*.

⁵ Robinson bases his argument here on the Old Testament idea of a "peculiar people." 106 and often. ⁶ 106ff., 111. ⁷ 121. This is practically the argument against Hall.

⁸ 55, 232 and often. Personal, voluntary profession of faith is the keynote in this whole argument. The Anglican church does not require it.

⁹ No *reformation* is ever mentioned as having occurred under Henry VIII. The clergy of that time were "anti-Christ," 377.

¹⁰ Under Edward, the church was separated by compulsion "without profession of faith by individual members." 317, 231, 65, 66. ¹¹ 490.

¹² Robinson's argument here is long and generally keen. It adds to our knowledge of Elizabeth's policy. Specially important: 490-491, 319, 313, 316.

¹³ 288. ¹⁴ 6. ¹⁵ 322, 364, 257. ¹⁶ 414, 92, 393, 398. ¹⁷ 92.

glican church is impatient of reformation, passing daily from bad to worse.

Robinson uses, in this argument, those Separatist "gravamina" which were current in all previous discussion. His use of the historical argument is not new; but it is more logical and complete than that of Barrowe, and is a point at which Robinson's thought possesses considerable originality.

He now turns to an arraignment of the Anglican body as a false polity. No national church, since the right order was established in the New Testament, can be a true church.¹ The prelacy is without foundation in the New Testament.² It has usurped the power of the keys entrusted to all members of the Christian body,³ and assumed to itself the power of ordination which lies by right in the people.⁴ And the Anglican ministry is also contrary to the New Testament requirement;⁵ it is essentially Romish in its form and functions;⁶ it is falsely chosen, inaugurated, and carried out.⁷ Robinson attacks the doctrine of apostolic succession fiercely,⁸ and is especially emphatic in the charge that the Anglican ministry utterly fails in its chief duty of preaching.⁹

But an even greater proof of this falsity is the fact that the Anglican state church has a ministry that is utterly powerless to govern the parishes by the administration of censure or excommunication. This is the prerogative of officers outside the parish members and their official representatives, which is utterly false and tyrannical.¹⁰

The whole discussion of Robinson springs from a practical source. At every step the working of his mind becomes clearer. He has no natural hatred for the Anglican system; he tends rather to cling to it. But his spirit is that of a practical reformer, and the character of the parish system drives him to the Scriptures and to his theology for relief. Here he finds

¹ Even the national church of the Old Testament, Robinson claims, does not justify the Anglican organization, and, that having been done away with in the New Testament, a national church is "monstrous," 480.

² Robinson enters upon no critical discussion of *πρεσβύτερος* and *ἐπίσκοπος* in the Apostolic churches. He speaks of bishops of individual churches; but he proposes no theory except the motive of official selfishness to explain the rise of the episcopate, 444.

³ 201, 255, 256, cf. Luther, *An den christlichen Adel*, Braune's edn., p. 13.

⁴ 436. ⁵ 414. ⁶ 277-278. ⁷ 382-385, 286. ⁸ 171, 375.

⁹ 413, 373, 375, 385. The typical Anglican preacher had been already described as a "dumme dogge." Dexter, *Cong. as seen*, 208. ¹⁰ 130.

another church order prescribed and demanded, and therefore he becomes a Separatist instead of a conforming Puritan.

Robinson relegates the ceremonies to a very minor position in this controversy. Against ceremonies *per se* he has no objection; it is only of their abuse in the popular mind that he complains.¹ He opposes the use of the Apocrypha² and of "stinted prayers."³ The whole Separatist idea moves with Robinson in this discussion far beyond a scruple of the vestments, as with Hooper, or a "forward desire" for reform in the labors of the conforming Puritans; it becomes a definite system of polity, grounded positively upon the Scriptures and ready to do battle for itself before the world.

Hence Robinson must justify himself to those who persistently maintained that agitation within the Anglican communion and not separation from it was the true way in which to realize the New Testament teachings concerning the church. This he does by means of Browne's principle, which he names connivancy at sin. This must be given in Robinson's own words:

"If iniquity be committed in the church, and complaint, and proof accordingly made, and the church will not reform, or reject the party offending, then by abetting that party and his sin, she makes it her own by imputation, and enwraps herself in the same guilt with the sinner. And remaining irreformable, either by such members of the same church, as are faithful, if there be any, or by other sister churches, wipeth herself out the Lord's church-roll, and now ceaseth to be any longer the true church of Christ."⁴

Robinson's argument thus becomes intensely personal in its bearing. Separation is not a matter of expediency or a plausible theory; it is a matter of personal obligation, involving personal sin, and comes into the determination of personal Christian character. Every Anglican communion is false;⁵ every Anglican communicant becomes involved in the sin of his sinful church. There are, indeed, personal graces in members of the Anglican church which deserve recognition; but Scripture "forbids communion not only in the evil works of wicked men but with their persons and commands a separation not only real but personal."⁶ Hence it is a personal sin to be present at the ser-

¹ 27-28.

² 275, 452.

³ 451.

⁴ 260.

⁵ 272.

⁶ 459-464.

vices of the Anglican state church,¹ or to participate in prayer with them.² No religious fellowship or fraternity can be recognized between Separatist and Anglican.³

This position is no more radical than that which Robinson's predecessors had held, and his argument is far more free from extravagance and invective than theirs had been. It is not the logic of hatred, but the resolute attitude of a devoted reformer.

We pass now to Robinson's positive teaching concerning the church. It is a discussion of the Apostolic model rather than the development of a system of polity. He reads much of his own *a priori* notion into the passages on which he bases his arguments. But that was the common method of his opponents also ; it was the second decade of the seventeenth century and not the age of historical-critical exegesis.

Robinson traces the church from the Protevangelium in Eden to the Apostolic age,⁴ and draws this definition of it :

"A company consisting though but of two or three separated from the world, whether unchristian or anti-christian, and gathered into the name of Christ by a covenant made to walk in all the ways of God made known unto them, is a church and so hath the whole power of Christ."⁵

The power for self-organization, and the choice and institution of officers, lies wholly within the body of associated believers,⁶ Robinson argues. Hence a body of believers so associated is in a true sense a church,⁷ although possessing no officers. It may also displace the officers whom it has made.⁸

Against this was the argument of Bernard, representing the presbyterianizing Puritans : the officers are essential to the church ; they alone have the power to govern the congregation ; hence the whole power of Christ rests in the presbytery and the

¹ 460. ² 463. ³ 109-110.

⁴ 203-205, 207, 260, 309.

⁵ 132. This definition was not new either in regard to the elements involved or the emphasis laid upon them. The definition breaks into five elements :

1. The unit is a congregation, cf. 357. These are distinct and independent, yet mutually related for advice and help.

2. The regenerate form its subject matter. cf. 127. Regeneration is to be judged by the visible fruits of a holy life, secret things being left with God. This is the spring of all insistence upon discipline in the congregations; the church must be confined to the elect.

3. Profession of Christ was necessary. Cf. 127 ff.

4. Terms of the covenant allow the largest increase in knowledge of God's will; it does not presuppose perfection. cf. 298.

5. The power of Christ rests with the congregation. 191, 201, 235. The limitations of the dissertation permit the display of only element five. Robinson discusses them all extensively.

⁶ 136, 138. ⁷ 137. ⁸ *Ibid.*

elders of the church. To this theory Robinson opposes a strange medley of polities ; the church is, in respect to Christ, a monarchy, in respect to the eldership, an aristocracy, in respect to the body, a popular state.¹ Jesus is King over his church ; but he has communicated his power, jointly and severally, to the members of his church, each one of whom is made prophet, priest, and king.² Thus theoretically Robinson is, like Browne, a defender of an ecclesiastical democracy.

But he comes now to consider that practical condition of affairs which arises under the organized operation of government. Then it becomes necessary for some, who are equal in rank, to be set over the others, in an office that is ministerial and not one of lordship.³ Hence arises the aristocratic element in the polity of the true church, the presbytery. This presbytery the people are bound to obey ; they are the true governors.⁴ But it is one thing for the officers to *govern* the church and another thing for them to *be* the church. It is impossible to say that the presbytery is the church. Nor is the office of ruling so appropriated to the elders that none may interfere in it ; rather, the members are bound to see that the elders rule well.⁵ Neither is power committed to the elders immediately from and by Christ, but "mediately by Christ from the church." This, then, is the true church polity, "wherein all have equal power, and voice in the determining of things, some one or few going before the rest in guiding and directing them." The Parliament itself is an illustration of the organization of the true church.⁶

The position outlined above, under whatever name it passes, is democracy. The principle of perfect equality and right in the corporate body, where an elective officer guides general deliberation and each member is jointly responsible for the officer's con-

¹ The same idea had been expressed already in the fourth Martin Marprelate tract of 1588-'89. See Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 163. Robinson also compares the organization of the church to that of the House of Commons. *Works*, ii : 140. ² 141.

³ There is a remarkable correspondence in many points between the first sections of Luther's *An den christlichen Adel* (1520), and parts of Robinson's work in this controversy. For example :

"gleich als wenn zehn Brüder, Königs Kinder und gleiche Erben, einen erwählten, das Erbe für sie zu regieren ; sie wären doch alle Könige und gleicher Gewalt, während doch einen zu regieren befohlen wird." — (Braune's ed'n, p. 8.)

"And yet as if a multitude of kings should assemble together some one or few must be appointed over the assembly though all be kings yet some are to be set over the rest, and that in office not kingly but ministerial." *Works*, ii : 141.

duct, could not be more explicitly stated. But it was the time when Tudor absolutism was passing into its extravagant emphasis under the Stuart sovereigns. Democracy was a term in bad repute. It took more than a century for the distinction between anarchy and democracy to work itself clear. Bernard represented the common thought of his time when he called democracy "the nurse of confusion, the mother of schism, the breeder of contention."¹

Thus Robinson outlines a position which stands between Brownism and Barrowism; it breaks with the aristocracy of the latter, while it does not emphasize so radically the democracy of the former or insist, as Browne did, on the complete separation of church and state. Robinsonism is irenic and mediating in its spirit.

In the civil state, Robinson teaches, the ruling power is lord over the bodies and goods of his subject;² his commands, even if unjust and unholy, must be passively obeyed, although active participation in the execution of such commands is forbidden.³ He grounds his position on Scripture. In relation to the church, kings and queens stand in the position of "nursing fathers and mothers," but not of "procreant parents."⁴ The magistrate can make or execute no law which shall force an unholy person to enter the church, or compel the church to receive such a person. But that magistrates have some part in the activities of the church, apart from their position as its members, Robinson plainly maintains. They are to "repress public and notable idolatry," and provide that the Gospel, under the form of a right church order, be taught in their domains. He then adds most cautiously, "it may be also it is not unlawful for them, by some penalty or other, to provoke their subjects universally unto hearing [the Gospel thus preached] for their instruction and conversion; yea, to grant they may inflict the same upon them, if after due teaching, they offer themselves not unto the church."⁵

He never departs from the idea that the church is a body composed of individuals voluntarily professing faith in Christ. They may be "provoked" to the hearing of the Gospel and union

¹ Quoted in *Works*, ii : 223.

² Matt. 20 : 25, I Pet. 5 : 3, cf. p. 144. ³ I Pet. 2 : 13-14, 3 : 14-16.

⁴ 316, 488. The terms are significant. Robinson charges that the Anglican church is a false order and idolatry. Therefore, logically, his magistrate must repress it, and establish a separatist order. He does not express this, but the suggestion lies on the surface.

⁵ 315.

with the church; they can never be compelled to it. And yet, by admitting the possibility of the magistrates' use of penalty against the persistently unconverted, Robinson stands in the amazing position of opening the gate for the most intensely theocratic constitution of church and state.

We turn now to consider the most important of Robinson's controversies.

III. With Ames and others concerning Communion. 1611-1616.

SOURCES: 1. *The Profane Schism of the Brownists or Separatists*, by C. Lawne and others, 1612. 4^o viii : 88.

This contains a letter from Robinson to Ames and also other correspondence. Reprints are in Hanbury, *Historical Memorials*, vol. 1 (scattered), and in *Works*, iii : 86-89.

2. *Of Religious Communion*, etc., by John Robinson. 1614.

See *Works*, iii : 91-280. Only the first section of this is in reply to Lawne's book (pp. 104-155).

3. *A Manudiction for Mr. Robinson and such as consent with him in private communion to lead them on to public*. [By William Ames. 1614.] 4^o, p. 10.

To this Robinson replied by

4. *A Manumission to a Manudiction, or answer to a letter inferring public communion in the parish assemblies upon private with godly persons there*, by John Robinson. 1615.

This called out

5. *A second Manudiction for Mr. Robinson* [by William Ames]. 1615. p. 36.

6. *An Appeal on Truth's behalf (concerning some differences in the church at Amsterdam)* by John Robinson. 1624.

This is a letter which handles the case of a former member of the Leyden Church who was disciplined in Amsterdam for having attended the preaching of Anglican ministers. See *Works*, iii : 889-898.

7. *A Letter to the Congregational Church in London*, by John Robinson. 1624.

See *Works*, iii : 879 ff. It was first printed in

8. *A treatise of the Lawfulness of Hearing of the ministers in the Church of England; penned by that learned and reverend divine, Mr. John Robinz [sic], late Pastor to the English Church of God in Leyden. Printed according to the copy that was found in his study after his decease and now published for the common good*. 1634. See *Works*, iii : 839-885.

William Ames of Norfolk, a student of Christ's College, Cambridge, was trained there under Perkins and was one year Robinson's junior. He became later a pronounced Puritan in England but was compelled to flee to Holland in 1610, during which year he was probably, together with Henry Jacob, in close communication with Robinson in Leyden. He became minister to the English Church at the Hague, was later a professor at Franeker, and died in 1633, as Pastor in Amsterdam. During all this time he was in close touch with Separatists, and evidently a personal friend of Robinson.¹

Evidently while Pastor at the Hague letters passed between him and Robinson, from which the positions mutually advocated by them become clear.

¹ Details are in Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 364, 665; Ashton's preface in *Works* of Robinson, iii : 84; and Brook's *Lives of Puritans*, ii : 405-408.

Ames holds that the bond of communion between the believer and Christ justifies full and perfect communion between all believers, irrespective of the church order under which they may be. Hence the Separatists are wrong in denying both private and public communion with the members of the Anglican state church, who may be "visibly discerned" to have communion with Christ.¹

On the contrary Robinson maintained that communion does not necessarily flow from a discernment of personal relation to Christ; it is also a matter of external relation to a visible church order. There can be but one such church order that is right (*i. e.*, that according to the New Testament model), and this the Separatists find lacking in the Anglican state church. Hence they must deny all communion with Anglicans.²

This is a reiteration of the arguments which Robinson had used against Bernard, and is in perfect agreement with the views of the Amsterdam congregation.³ This was in 1611.

But during the following year an abusive attack on the whole Separatist movement was put out by certain excommunicated members of the Amsterdam church. Among the arguments to prove that the Separatists were in error was a somewhat exaggerated use of their principle of utter separation, with which, we have seen, John Robinson agreed in 1611. To this, however, the latter replies in a part of the treatise on *Communion*, with this new proposition:

"We, who profess a separation from the English national, provincial, diocesan, and parochial church and churches, in the whole formal state and order thereof, may, notwithstanding, lawfully communicate in private prayer and other the like holy exercises (not performed in their church communion nor by their church power and ministry) with the godly among them, though remaining of infirmity members of the same [Anglican] church or churches, except some other extraordinary bar come in the way between them and us."⁴

This new proposition Robinson defends on the ground that all external religious actions spring from one of the two sources, *faith* and *order*.⁵ Those actions which come under the category of *faith* may be called personal actions; those which fall in the

¹ *Works*, iii : 86.

² *Works*, iii : 87-88.

³ Hanbury, *Hist. Memorials*, i : 167; *Works*,

ii : 464.

⁴ *Works*, iii : 105.

⁵ Col. 2: 5.

category of order, church actions. The former, performed under the immediate impulse of personal faith, are private prayer, personal reading of the Scripture, profession of faith and confession of sins; the second, for the performance of which a church order is necessary in addition to personal faith, are the public communion and ministry of the church, the reception and rejection of members, the election or removal of ministers.¹ Now actions of the first kind may and ought to be performed by all persons of holy life, jointly or severally, irrespective of the church order under which they may chance to be gathered; while actions which are performed under the distinct category of church order, require that the order be a true one. Hence, practically all communion between Separatists and Anglicans of a private nature is to be encouraged; all public communion, on the other hand, is wrong and to be forbidden. The further arguments for these positions Robinson carries out to considerable length and into details.²

A new spirit pervades the whole discussion. The intensity of the polemic against Bernard is gone; the tone of party narrowness has become softened. Instead, Robinson argues here with a calmness and candor which is hardly to be found in any Separatist writing before this time. He does not stand defiantly against his opponents; but urges, rather, that his co-workers avoid the prejudices which their narrowness begets in their foes³ by seeking to recognize the good things in those very opponents. He maintains that the fact that men are in a false church order does not prove that they are not God's children, the Separatists' brethren, with the common bond of the faith and spirit between them.⁴ He admits most candidly the force of Ames's and Bernard's arguments, which he had formerly disputed.⁵ And yet, with every argument from Scripture and reason that he can muster, he defends his thesis that all communion between Separatist and Anglican in the constitution of the church is wrong.⁶

The steps by which Robinson reached this new ground lie, according to his own statement, clearly before us. He maintains that his general attitude at first was that separation from the Anglican church order only was necessary, and that he had come into opposition with Smyth on this account. But later,

¹ *Ditto*, 104-106.

² *Works*, iii : 100-126.

³ *Ditto*, 120.

⁴ *Ditto*, 121.

⁵ *Works*, iii : 123.

⁶ *Ditto*, 126-155.

finding his brethren against him and desiring to maintain peace, he had remitted the force of his earlier view and even opposed it. But a more careful examination of the whole matter, in the light of the Word, had shown him the right of his earliest view, which he now fully formulates.¹

Here are the same forces at work on the development of Robinson that we have seen in his earlier life. A temper essentially irenic and mediating is the background of the process. The weight of fellow opinion and the all-conclusive Scripture are the agencies which bring about the change. But the one supreme force here is the charitable, practical personality of the man. That nice distinction which he was enabled to draw from Paul's letter to the Colossians was the product of logic serving the interests of fraternity and practical peace. We see again that Robinson did not possess a mind closed and fixed within the bounds and dictates of pure reason. Personal qualities of the gentler, kindlier sort color and condition his speculation and practice.

Ames sought to lead his friend, who had yielded apparently to one-half the position of the former, to accept also the public communion of the Anglican Church.² Robinson replied less at length in his *Manumission*. He does not yield in the least from the thesis of his former book.³ The acknowledgment, he maintains, of the right of private communion does not logically lead in the least degree to the repudiation of the separation. He defends this with practically the same arguments which he had used against Bernard. He adds, however, a new discussion of the authority of the bishops, in which he maintains that their peculiar authority is not civil, derived from the king, but is wholly ecclesiastical;⁴ for example, the Bishop of Norwich has his civil authority elsewhere and only an ecclesiastical authority in his diocese. Hence the Separatists are not guilty of treason in refusing to submit to the authority of the bishops. A bishop may, indeed, have and exercise civil authority as member of Parliament or justice of the peace, in which he is to be honored and obeyed, like all the magistrates of the king.⁵

¹ *Ditto*, 102-103.

² Ames's *Manuduction* was practically directed to the same end as the writings of Bernard, that is, to overcome Separation as a whole. Ames is less harsh in debate.

³ *Manumission*, 1, 2.

⁴ *Ditto*, 15 ff.

⁵ *Ditto*, 23 ff.

This indicates a considerable change in the view held concerning the episcopal office by both the prelatical party and Separatists. The former had at first claimed that the episcopal authority came from the king, and Cranmer thought it necessary to be reappointed at the accession of Edward VI. But Robinson shows here that the Anglican bishops had now generally come to claim also a right *de jure divino*. Ames defends the earlier idea, plainly under the influence of the partisan motive to charge the Separatists with treason.¹ On the other hand, Robinson shows, for the Separatists, a clearer recognition of the legal aspect of the matter; he appeals to statutes, to the authority of Chief Justice Coke, and differentiates episcopal functions with a new distinctness.

From this controversy we learn also that Robinson's congregation was living in a relation of public communion with the Reformed churches of Leyden. Robinson maintains, in defending this practice, that public communion in "things lawful" is right, and defends the formal prayer in the Reformed churches on the ground that it is not enforced upon the congregations.

This also was an advance on the Amsterdam practice, and another index of an enlarging view of church relations at Leyden.²

But thus far, in spite of great changes, the essential grounds and practice of the separation remained unaltered. The question cannot fail to suggest itself, however, How elastic would the new principle of private and church actions be in its application? This question is answered by the consideration of two letters and a treatise which follow the controversy with Ames. They are not concerned with the introduction of any new principle, but with the administration and definition of an old one.

Henry Jacob, bearing the liberal policy of the Leyden pastor with him, had gathered a congregation in London, where, in im-

¹ This was a favorite form of argument with the opponents of the early Separatists, and it had imperial enactment behind it so far as the queen herself was concerned. But the Separatists never denied the royal supremacy in open terms. They transferred the argument to a denial of episcopal supremacy. Puritans and Separatists alike remained loyal monarchists.

² We find a most striking proof of the influence of this controversy in Paget's *An Arrow against the Separation of the Brownists*, 1618. He constantly holds up Robinson's arguments against Ainsworth. "In your [Ainsworth's] judgment he [Robinson] is a teacher of that false doctrine and a practicer of the same, holding private communion with Antichristian Idolatours, and members of a false Church as you esteeme them; he openly persisteth herein and drawes many with him to this practice: & this also when he had once condemned this course he takes and written against the same." p. 87.

mediate contact with the English state church and worship, a member of the new congregation was in the habit of attending Anglican services. The new congregation expelled her for it, but later received her back again on her promise to refrain from the practice. But then arose this difficulty: if the Anglican worship were idolatry, the member participating in it was an idolater, and her sin would be, by connivance, the same as the sin of the false church in its worship. In this strait they wrote to John Robinson for counsel. His answer is most striking: the action of the London church in receiving the member again was right; the member was no idolater; it would have been right to have received her again even if she should have continued her practice occasionally without neglect of the church where she held her membership.¹

Meantime the difficulty had reached Amsterdam, where a member was excommunicated for having attended the English parish church worship after having professed separation. Robinson's letter to them contains implicitly an approval of the excommunicated member's conduct.²

To justify this new policy Robinson wrote a treatise on this proposition: "that the hearing of the Word of God preached by the ministers of the Church of England, able to open and apply the doctrines of faith by that church professed, is both lawful, and in cases necessary for all, of all sects or sorts of Christians, having opportunity and occasion of so doing, though sequestering themselves from all communion with the hierarchical order there established."³ In defending this at length he asserts that men must not lose the benefit of that which is good because it chances to be mingled with what is erroneous.⁴ The man who partakes of that which is lawful in the church order, therefore, does not uphold thereby the unlawful elements in that church.⁵ And hearing the Word preached is a matter of faith, not of order, and hence of private communion and not of public.⁶

Thus John Robinson passed to the final position of his later years, which, for the whole history of Congregationalism, was epoch-making. The old principle of connivance at sin is retained, but so weakened in its application that it has practically lost force in the very point for which it was brought forward.

¹ *Works*, iii, 382.

² *Ditto*, 390.

³ *Works*, iii, 353, 378.

⁴ *Ditto*, 358, 359.

⁵ *Ditto*, 391.

⁶ *Ditto*, 362, 363.

The newer principle of personal and church action receives such a large interpretation, even from Scripture proofs, that it becomes almost lost. Nothing could be in sharper contrast with the invective and the insistence upon utter separation from the state church with which Robinson had opposed Bernard. The new position seems to have been appropriated at once by the Leyden church, upon which their pastor's personality was ineffaceably impressed. And thus the great policy of religious fraternity was won for the Separatists. It had not appeared before; it did not disappear afterward. It is the gift of the Leyden pastor to his church, and is the expression of his own personality. He reaches here the acme of his development.

IV. With John Yates concerning Lay-preaching. 1618.

SOURCE: *The People's Plea for the exercise of Prophecy against Mr. John Yates, his Monopoly*, by John Robinson [Leyden: W. Brewster], 1618. 16°. x:77.
See *Works*, iii: 283 335.

The matter of lay-preaching was sure to arise in the Separatist congregations, because of their custom of allowing laymen to discuss religious matters in their services. It had formed a part of the general Anglican attack, and had been variously defended. Robinson himself had advocated "prophesying" — that is, in the terminology of the time, preaching of any sort by laymen — in the controversy with Bernard. He simply states the same grounds more fully in the present discussion.

The sources of Robinson's argument here are Scripture and the Reformation doctrine of the Power of the Keys.¹ He states the Separatist position clearly, but adds nothing distinctively new.

It is necessary at this point to subject the sources to a critical examination, for the present condition of the evidence concerning this work of Robinson seems to be chaotic and erroneous, owing to lack of careful study of the document itself.

There seems to be an utter lack of external evidence from contemporary writers as to the occasion of the controversy. The matter has been generally treated as follows:

Hanbury (*Historical Memorials*, i: 352) simply introduces extracts from *The Peoples' Plea* (which we will hereafter in this discussion designate P), giving the full title as above, but offering no suggestion regarding its relation to any other document.

¹ Luther, *An den christlichen Adel*, Braune's edn., 13.

Ashton notices the controversy in his *Memoir* (see Robinson's *Works*, i: xvii), saying that Robinson, when residing at Leyden, "hearing that Rev. Mr. Yates of that city [Norwich] had circulated a tract denouncing lay preaching, wrote a treatise in refutation." For this statement that P is a reply to a "tract" he offers no proof except a reference to *Works*, iii: 285-287 (the preface to P) from which, however, no such deduction is possible.

Ashton also says again (*Works*, iii: 283) "[Yates] wrote a treatise against 'Persons Prophesying out of office,' or what in modern times is designated as Lay-preaching. The arguments of Mr. Yates were copied out, and, when duly attested, were forwarded to Mr. Robinson by a person whom he designates by the initials of W. E." Ashton gives no references or proofs of this statement.

Dexter says nothing of Yates' work, but, on the strength of Hanbury's title for P, he inserts in the *Bibliographical Collections of Cong. as seen*, under the year 1617 :

"*J. Yates—His Monopolie: Against persons prophesying out of office, etc.*" Dexter was unable to locate this book in any library, although he was an indefatigable worker and has generally succeeded in locating the books of his list somewhere.

Brown (*Pilgrim Fathers*, 115) says that Yates "had written against 'Persons Prophesying out of Office,'" but gives no proofs as to the nature of the writing.

The external evidence therefore as to the occasion of writing P is wholly indefinite.

The internal evidence gathers about the following points :

1. Robinson says : "The arguments in his [Yates'] writing (sent unto me by W. E. with his consent and that before the magistrate) I have set down word for word and answered" (p. 286). Now "writing" may mean a printed book. But it is hardly probable that the arguments of a printed and circulated book would have been copied out and sent to Robinson. We know that he had in his possession books by his opponents, *e. g.*, Hall's "large and learned volume" (286).

2. Yates' arguments are represented as scattered here and there in his "large discourse" (286). This word is indefinite in Robinson's usage, but would refer most naturally to a sermon or series of addresses.

3. Robinson styles his own work "An Answer to arguments

laid down" by Yates, but mentions no book as containing them (285).

4. Yates has used personal arguments directed against Robinson, addressing him as "brother" (295, 304).

5. Yates' "writing" was in two parts, the first of which Robinson answers in 288-309, the latter, in 309-335. The first section contained a personal attack on Robinson; the second answered Robinson's arguments for lay-preaching contained in *Justification*.

6. In answering the first part Robinson quotes the arguments of Yates often more extensively than his own reply to them. This he would hardly have done had he had a book before him, or been replying to a printed and circulated book. He sums up Bernard's arguments very concisely, *e. g.*, errors 6 and 8 in *Justification*.

7. The first section in Yates has a strongly oratorical style (especially 294). Robinson says (296): "If I should follow Mr. Yates in his course, I should rather write one sermon against another than bring an answer to an argument." This does not seem to be ironical, and would indicate that the first part was in the form of sermons.

8. In the second part is a passage which serves to clear up somewhat the relation of *Justification*, of Yates' "writing" and of P. Robinson says: "I do quote next in my book Luke x. 1-9 [*i. e.*, in *Justification, Works*, ii: 247] which, for that W. E. omitteth and leaves out, Mr. Yates thanketh God," etc. Yates also shows by a sharp argument outlined in P 317 that he knows the counter arguments of *Justification*. Compare also P 333.

9. The second part is directed to one reader, who is the same W. E., as shown by the context. Yates is quoted by Robinson as writing: "But, says your author, compare this place," etc. (318). The place mentioned is Robinson's argument in (*Works*, ii: 247) *Justification*. "Your author" must therefore mean Robinson. W. E. is the party addressed.

From the above points we now venture the following hypothesis concerning the occasion of P:

The arguments of Robinson in *Justification* had made so strong an impression upon a certain man whose initials are W. E. that he made an abstract of them and asked his pastor, Mr. Yates, to reply. This was done, probably in the form of a ser-

mon or sermons, notes of which, or the manuscript itself, W. E. obtained. But later Yates, coming to know Robinson's book personally, wrote more carefully and fully for W. E. his opinions on the controverted points. Undoubtedly both parties knew Robinson, the controversy gained perhaps some local fame in Norwich (see the address of P), and the certified manuscripts were sent to Robinson at Leyden. These were the materials that lay before him when he wrote P.

This hypothesis is in line with the custom of the time when perplexed laymen were accustomed to request pastors for a written opinion concerning doubtful points. See the case of Gifford in Hanbury, *Hist. Memorials*, i: 49.

Whether Yates ever put these arguments into the form of a book is very doubtful. Certainly Ashton is in error on this point, and Dexter's entry in his *Bibliographical Collections* should be either explained or erased.

V. With Thomas Helwys concerning Baptism.

SOURCES: ¹ *A short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, by Thomas Helwys, 1612. 16^o. 212. See Hanbury, *Hist. Memorials*, i: 265-271.

² *Of Religious Communion, etc. With the silencing of the clamours raised by Mr. Thomas Helwisse [sic] against our retaining the baptism received in England and administering baptism unto infants, etc.*, by John Robinson. 1614. See Hanbury, i: 256 ff. and *Works*, iii: 155-237.

This controversy is with the radical element coming from the Separatist ranks. It is not concerning the mode of baptism, but regarding its nature and subjects. As influencing later American practice, it is very important.

To fully understand this discussion it is necessary to cast a short preliminary glance at the history of the Gainsborough congregation after it reached Amsterdam in 1606. The pastor, John Smyth, came into conflict with the brethren there about 1608, owing to views concerning the use of the Bible in church services, and, early in 1609, becoming convinced that infant baptism was unscriptural, and made a church so practicing a false church, he and his sympathizers dissolved their congregation and formed a new one on the basis of believer's baptism. Smyth was, however, excommunicated soon after by the church thus formed, and its leaders became Thomas Helwys and John Merton. The congregation seems now to have become convinced generally that flight from persecution was wrong, and to remain in exile, cowardice. Hence, in 1611-1612, a majority of

them returned to England, where they became the parent congregation of the English General Baptists. Helwys died in 1620, and his successor was Murton. Both these were defenders of Arminian doctrines as well as of believer's baptism.¹

Robinson defends his congregation from the charge of cowardice and sin in their flight and exile, chiefly on the ground of examples in the Old and New Testaments,² and passes quickly to justify the retention of baptism received in the Anglican state church.³ Baptism, he argues, is the seal of the covenant of grace which presupposes faith and implies a covenant relation already entered upon. And this seal, though administered under a false order, does not thereby become false, but, by faith and the spirit, becomes sanctified to those who so receive it. Hence, the true baptism received in England is rightly retained by the Separatists.⁴

But Robinson's important statements come in relation to the matter of infant baptism. His teaching on this point demands a more detailed consideration.⁵

The characteristic point here is Robinson's treatment of the covenant. It is the mutual promise between God and man for the doing of certain things; in that of the Old Testament the children were included with the fathers; in the New, they are also included, for it is far more reasonable to include them in the covenant of grace and mercy than in that of law (Gal. 3: 10). Paul teaches that, if one of the parents be a believer, the children are holy; that is, with the holiness of the covenant in which they are born. Children are thus comprehended in their parents as "branches in the roots." And infants thus saved are saved by the grace of Christ, and, he adds, "those that perish (though I desire, if such were the will of God, and so could gladly believe if the Scriptures taught it, that all were

¹ For the details of this movement see Newman, *A History of the Baptist Churches in the U. S.*, N. Y., 1894, pp. 38-47. The validity of Robinson's report, which found severe criticism among earlier Baptist historians, has finally been recognized. He writes: "Mr. Smyth, Mr. Helwisse, and the rest, having utterly dissolved and disclaimed their former church, came together to erect a new church by baptism . . . and after some straining of courtesy who should begin . . . Mr. Smyth baptized first himself, and next Mr. Helwisse, and so the rest, making their particular confessions." *Works*, iii: 168.

² *Works*, iii: 156-158.

³ Helwys, *Short Declaration*, 123-124.

⁴ *Works*, iii: 165, 166-168, 188, Helwys, *Ditto*, 127-128.

⁵ *Works*, iii: 198-231.

saved) do perish for that original guilt and corruption wherein they are conceived and born.”¹

The thorough Calvinism of this teaching is at once apparent. Robinson’s position is so important in the emphasis which it lays on the covenant that the results must be noticed. For John Robinson formulates here that opinion which ruled all the policy of the New England Colonies later. From it arose in the third generation that *via media* for those children of church members who, having been baptized in infancy, had experienced no religious “conversion” and hence were not, by Separatist theory, fit subjects for church membership; on the other hand, they had been the recipients of baptism. For them was established a “Half-way Covenant,”² the existence of which caused long and bitter agitation in New England. Robinson did not see the results which would be manifested in time from his teaching. A personal kindness and emphasis upon the covenant of grace led him to a conclusion in strange contrast with the severity of those positions which become apparent in the consideration of his doctrine in general.

VI. With John Murton concerning Calvinism. 1624.

SOURCES: 1. *A Declaration of the Faith of English people remaining at Amsterdam in Holland*, [by Thomas Helwys]. 1611.

Reprinted in Hansard Knolly’s Society, *Confessions*, 1854, 3-10, and partly, also, in Crosby, *Hist. of English Baptists*, ii, Ap. 1.

2. *A Description of what God hath predestinated concerning Man, in his Creation, Transgression, and Regeneration. As also an answer to John Robinson touching Baptism*, [by John Murton]. 1620. 16^o, viii : 176.

3. *A Defence of the Doctrine Propounded by the Synod at Dort: Against John Murton and his Associates in a Treatise entitled “A Description,” etc.*, by John Robinson. 1624. 4^o, iv 203.

See *Works*, i : 263-471.

Thus far we have observed from Robinson’s controversies a development toward largeness and liberality of view, which is the product of a charitable, fraternal personality rather than of a perfectly logical mind. In the present controversy all this is changed.

The Baptist congregation under Helwys and Murton seems to have laid great emphasis on inner light and personal revelation,³ as the continental Anabaptists had done, and to have been thorough followers of Arminius. The latter position Robinson

¹ *Works*, iii: 231.

² See *Papers of the American Society of Church History*, Vol. V, 1893, 68. Also Walker, *The Half-way Covenant*, 1892.

³ *Works*, iii : 268.

attacks in this controversy, his argument taking the form of an enthusiastic defense of the decrees of the Synod of Dort. These were the product of the deliberations of the Synod which met in Dort from Nov. 13, 1618, to May 9, 1619. They represent an overwhelming victory in the Synod for high Calvinism over the teachings of Arminius and are the very crystallization of dogmatic inflexibility and positiveness.¹ To the defence of this dogmatic system Robinson now comes with an unqualified approval. He accords utterly with the decrees of the Synod.

To display at length his theology is impossible at this point. He is a supralapsarian Calvinist. The inconsistency which he recognizes between the ideas of election and human freedom he does not seek to explain, except as he brings in two scholastic and subtle distinctions, which he handles but feebly.²

In dogma, therefore, Robinson is not in the least an original thinker, but a literal follower of the theological system of Calvin, which had been sealed with the stamp of perfection and made inflexible at Dort. From the very first that we know of Robinson he fully accepted Calvin's dogmatic system;³ he gave the sanction of his *Catechism* to the teaching of Perkins,⁴ which was thoroughly Calvinistic; and at last, becoming all the while intenser in his assertions, he stands on the ground occupied by the Dort Synod. He goes to the very bounds of supralapsarianism, asserts the condemnation of non-elect infants, maintains the limitation of Christ's atonement to the elect, and seems mildly surprised because his opponents do not settle comfortably into a satisfied acceptance of his subtle distinctions and high mystery.

Here, then, is a perplexing phenomenon. In his controversies on polity we have found Robinson open, charitable, and progressing towards larger views which became epoch-making for the history of the movement. In dogma we find him not merely inflexible, but becoming increasingly rigid. The final question proposes itself now: Can these opposite tendencies consistently operate in one personality? This we propose to attempt to answer in the final and following section.

¹ "On the 23d of April, 1619, the canons were signed by all the members of the Synod. Arminians were pronounced heretics, schismatics, teachers of false doctrine. They were declared incapable of filling any clerical or academical post. No man thenceforth was to teach children, lecture to adolescents, or preach to the mature, unless a subscriber to the doctrines of the unchanged, unchangeable, orthodox church. On the 30th April and 1st May the Netherland Confession and Heidelberg Catechism were declared to be infallible. No change was to be possible in either formulary." Motley, *Life and Death of John of Barneveldt*. ii: 310.

² *Works*, i. 291.

³ *Works*, iii, 411.

⁴ *Ditto*, 426-436.

JOHN ROBINSON'S PERSONALITY AND HIS PLACE IN THE HISTORY
OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

SOURCES: 1. *New Essays; or, Observations Divine and Moral, collected out of the Holy Scriptures, Ancient and Modern Writers, both Divine and Human; as also out of the great volume of Men's manners: tending to the furtherance of Knowledge and Virtue*, by John Robinson. Printed in 1628.

It was also printed with a shorter title in 1625, the book probably being in press when Robinson died. Printed again in 1638, 1642, 1654. See *Works*, i, 1-259.

2. *Apologia justa et necessaria quorundam Christianorum æque contumeliose ac communiter dictorum Brownistarum sive Barrowistarum, per Johannem Robinsonum, Anglo-Leidenensem, etc.* 1619.

Again, in English, translated by Robinson himself, 1625. Again, containing a *Catechism*, 1644. See *Works*, iii, 1-79.

The chief thing about John Robinson is personal religion.¹ Under that one category he himself subsumes all that tends to man's happiness;² it is the chief thing about a nation as well as about a man.³ Yet men have other duties which are sacred and obligatory;⁴ the religious man is to be a better citizen because of his religion. Practically he did not work his ideas clear from hierarchical elements; but he always exalted the civil state and the duties of citizenship. His theology was theocentric; he never discusses Christology, and he speaks very little of the earthly life of Christ. The world is the work of God, who is immanent in it.⁵ Nature he considers in a mediaeval light; the stars are possessed of superhuman "virtues."⁶ Even his thought of flowers and blue skies is joyous, not because he takes a spontaneous delight in that which is beautiful, but because "the works of God" are manifested in them. The world of his fellow-men, too, is seen through the medium of his religious thought. There is little true good in the world,⁷ he exclaims; earth is more like hell than heaven;⁸ men love evil most of all;⁹ the endless, awful punishments of the wicked after death are not more than their desert.¹⁰ And yet, in spite of a religious pessimism so deep, Robinson is a man of unbounded hope in the thought of redemption and the life of the believer on earth. The church is "heaven on earth."¹¹ His own congregation is filled with

¹ Religion is the secret relationship which the soul bears to God. *Works*, i, 33.

² *Ditto*, 33. ³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "No difference or alienation in religion . . . dissolves any natural or civil bond of society or abolisheth any the least bond thereof. A king, husband, or father," though atheist or excommunicate, remains such, as much as though he were the best Christian in the world, and all duties are, by inviolable right, to be rendered him. *Ditto*, 39.

⁵ *Ditto*, 15. ⁶ *Ditto*, 14.

⁷ *Ditto*, 209. ⁸ *Ditto*, 114. ⁹ *Ditto*, 230. ¹⁰ *Ditto*, 214. ¹¹ *Works*, ii, 128.

“the beauty of Zion and the glory of the Lord.”¹ It is worth struggle and exile to preach this gospel. Personally he seems joyous in his difficulties and exile. Introspection plays a large part in the working of his mind ;² his own weakness, failure, and sin he confesses at times with intense expressions. And yet he always regards himself as personally in union with God, by Him kept from evil, and redeemed forever from final death. There is much in this of the “language of Zion.” But we see here a sincere soul who makes personal religion the very center of all his thought concerning God, the world, his fellow-men, and himself.

From this flows the second great fact about him ; he was a practical reformer. In every undertaking to which he put his hand his desire was to advance the righteousness of individual and community. The first and the persistent fact about his work is its practical and not its speculative character. He sought to bring men to realize their professed faith in a righteous life. Verbal profession of that faith was not enough ; it must become actual in holy living.³ But this he found to be impossible in the parish church. The practical difficulty drove him to the New Testament and to the theological system of Calvin. From these he drew the ideas which shaped his polity ; but not because he held a dogma first and translated it into polity. In practical despair he turned to these sources for help ; a necessity of his work and not a dictate of his logic made him a Separatist. And hence, he would be likely later to modify his position where his personal sense of necessity or expediency dictated, rather than where his purely logical conclusions might demand it.

But, although so pre-eminently a reformer, Robinson was not a revolutionist. He proclaimed a gospel of universal equality for believers, but we have noticed already his loyalty to the state, and the freedom of his church from communistic tendencies. Robinson seems to have remained practically uninfluenced by the Anabaptists. The points in which his teaching agrees with theirs are due to the common emphasis on certain great truths of the Gospel. They agreed in the general desire for a restoration of primitive Christianity, in the authority of Scripture, and in the regenerate character of the church. But they absolutely disagreed in rela-

¹ *Ditto*, 223. ² *Works*, i, 22.

³ Holiness of life is a seal of the right church order, Robinson often maintains.

tion to dogmatic principles, the limitation of baptism to adult believers, "inner light" and personal revelation, the taking of oaths, and the legality of war, the exercise of the magistracy by church members, and other points. Robinson expressly repudiates Anabaptist teaching, and there is no indication of friendly contact between him and the Anabaptist leaders.¹

At this point the question also arises concerning the influence exerted upon Robinson during his residence in Leyden by forces peculiarly Dutch. This is bound up with the whole discussion not yet settled regarding the Netherland's influence upon the Puritan and Pilgrim movement in general. We can safely say only that the liberalizing policy of Robinson may have been encouraged by the freedom which he found in Holland, while his connection with the high Calvinistic party in the university probably intensified his dogmatic positions. We simply cannot find definite points at which this influence made itself felt.²

Our chief impressions of Robinson are drawn from his controversies. He held his opinions as a matter of conscience, and clung to them in general with tenacity; yet he expresses also his recognition of the fact that he was liable to error.³ He is in temper a conservative. Winslow bears testimony also to his irenic spirit in his own church,⁴ and in his relations to the Amsterdam congregation we see the same.⁵ A similar spirit appears frequently in his printed writings.⁶ His honesty in argument is also striking; he often states the positions of his opponents before replying to them, and in no case have we found him taking unfair advantage of or misrepresenting an argument of an opponent.⁷ In comparison with the controversial litera-

¹ See a resumé of Anabaptist teaching in Newman, *A History of the Baptist Churches in the U. S.*, 36. Robinson repudiates their teaching in *Works*, ii: 198, 330, 391, 474; iii: 268; i: 270. See, on the other hand, Griffiths, *Anabaptists*, who, without specific proof, asserts that Robinson was strongly influenced by Anabaptist thought.

² The general discussion is still on. The matter of the Dutch influence is handled most exhaustively by Douglas Campbell, *The Puritan in Holland, England, and America*, 2 vols., N. Y.: Harper, 1832. He speaks of Robinson's church in Vol. ii: 241-250. The limits of the dissertation render impossible an extensive survey of his arguments. Concerning Robinson personally, he implies no more than is indicated above.

³ *Works*, i: 39.

⁴ "His study was peace and union so far as might agree with faith and a good conscience. *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, 93.

⁵ Ainsworth, *Animadversion*, 128, 135.

⁶ *Works*, iii: 353.

⁷ Cf. *Ditto*, 286 and 361.

ture of the time, Robinson possesses very little of the harshness and personal invective which was a common weapon against a foe.¹

Robinson's learning was very extensive. He shows a knowledge of Hebrew, used the New Testament in the original, wrote a very fair Latin style, and was especially familiar with the Fathers of the first four centuries, the Latin classics, and such reformers as Calvin and Peter Martyr. There is also an element of criticism in his treatment of the Fathers. He does not hesitate to charge them with error, and with having sometimes ushered the cause of Antichrist into the world. He esteems their authority, but does not recognize their infallibility or exemption from criticism.² He is an independent scholar in relation to the Scriptures. He appeals directly to the Word; commentaries and interpretations are of use, but only the original Scriptures are final and necessary.³ He holds to their perfect inspiration; but his view of this seems to have changed somewhat, for we find him maintaining against Yates that they contain a natural element, and that only those parts of them which cannot be accounted for by ordinary means are to be regarded as supernatural.⁴ There is also something very broad in Robinson's scope and method of observation. Narrowed to the necessities of partisan discussion, ministering to a small community, and fighting for existence religiously, it would have been most natural for his field of view to have been confined to the narrow world of his controversy and ministry. But he casts his net widely; classical learning, the literary life of the church, and "the great volume of men's manners"⁵ come within its reach. His observation is marked by shrewd common-sense first of all; he possesses a philosophy of practical life.⁶

Robinson's argument is generally logical; he handles his facts adroitly; but his style is heavy, and his polemic very often wearisome. He is earnest and sincere, with only occasional flashes of humor.

¹ See Bromhead in Hunter, *Collections*, 165, for an example of this; it almost equals Luther's reply to Henry VIII for harshness.

² *Works*, iii: 51-53.

³ *Ditto*, 299.

⁴ *Ditto*, 305, 319.

⁵ Cf. the title of *New Essays*.

⁶ In his *Essays* he treats such subjects as Counsel, Books, Labor, Poverty, Liberality, Health, Education of Children.

We must now sketch briefly the impress which Robinson's personality made upon his own time. We have noticed the history of every Separatist congregation except his, especially that under the lead of Smyth. Without exception, these fell to pieces, most often because of the personal vagaries of their leaders, or their inability to restrain the radical elements in their congregations. This was the case in John Smyth's church, which was composed of members of the same social condition, who had been neighbors in England to Robinson's congregation. Yet the latter trebled its membership in Holland, colonized Plymouth, and left an enviable record for self-control and honorable citizenship behind them. John Robinson was either their sole officer, or had only Elder Brewster for associate. The conclusion is beyond doubt that the personal impression of Robinson's character upon his congregation accounts for the fact noted above. And this conclusion is borne out by the personal testimony of Winslow and Bradford.¹

It has been customary to speak of Robinson in connection with the phrase "more light," which was used in the *Farewell Address* which Robinson is said to have made as the exiles were about to send the emigrant party to America. The words are as follows :

"In the next place for the wholesome counsel Mr. Robinson gave that part of the church whereof he was pastor, at their departure from him to begin the great work of plantation in New England, . . . he used these expressions, or to the same purpose : We are now erelong to part asunder, and the Lord knoweth whether he should ever live to see our faces again; but whether the Lord had appointed it or not, he charged us before God and his blessed angels, to follow him no further than he had followed Christ. And if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of his, to be as ready to receive it, as ever we were to receive any truth by his ministry : For he was very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy Word. He took occasion also to bewail the state and condition of the reformed churches, who were come to a period in religion and would go no further than the instruments of their reformation: As, for example, the Lutherans could not be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw, for whatever part of God's will he had further imparted and revealed to Calvin, they would rather die than embrace it. And as also, saith he, you see the Calvinists, they stick where he left them; a misery much to be lamented, for, though they were precious shining lights in their time, yet God had not revealed his whole will to them . . . Here also he put us in mind of our Church-covenant, at least that part of it, whereby we promise and covenant

¹ Winslow, at length, in *Hypocritie Unmasked*, 13ff. Bradford in Hanbury, *Hist. Memorials*, 1: 458ff.

with God and one with another, to receive whatsoever light or truth shall be made known to us from his written word: but withal [he] exhorted us to take heed what we received for truth and well to examine and compare, and weigh it with other Scriptures of truth before we received it. For, saith he, it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick, anti-christian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once."

This is evidently Winslow's report from memory. It is the only authentic source, all others being traceable to this. Its integrity and genuineness are safely established. The context in which it occurs is as follows: Winslow published his book in 1648 against Gorton, who had charged that Robinson, as pastor, made "and to the last professed separation from other the churches of Christ." To disprove this, Winslow brings forward: first, his personal testimony as to Robinson's ideas on separation; second, the practice of the Leyden congregation; third, the farewell words of Robinson himself.¹ Hence, as used by Winslow, the words are concerned with polity and not with dogma.²

This accords with the conclusions which we have reached in this dissertation on other grounds. Robinson's dogma was inflexible; his views on polity were open to change. Is there a contradiction in this phenomenon?

Every reformer has certain points to which he clings with life-and-death tenacity. He has something illogical, often something fanatical about him. He is logical up to the point at which the matter for which he is fighting is touched; then he is obstinate. Necessity in practical life masters the reasoning faculty, in other words, necessity becomes logic.

We have established the fact that John Robinson was an intense religious reformer by nature, personally practical, and an organizer of marked power; necessity drove him to two sources of authority, the New Testament and Calvinism. Now such a person as Robinson was, would incline to yield wherever practice showed him that the vital point contended for was not surrendered in change; he would remain utterly inflexible wherever its loss was involved in any change. This is what happened at Leyden. Practical experience showed that the

¹ *Hypocrisy Unmasked*, in Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, 404 407.

² This thesis was first maintained by Dexter in the face of severe opposition. For the phrases above quoted are more widely known than any other public utterance of Robinson, and they had been used and understood with no regard to their context.

severity of the original separation could be mitigated without the loss of the great idea that the congregation was a communion of saints, possessing the full power of Christ for self-organization and purification. To the pacific, large-minded pastor that change was welcome, and he made it. But to him, free-will, the universal atonement of Christ, the whole system of Arminius seemed to cut at his great idea ; he stiffened in inflexibility. The two acts are consistent parts of one personality, the personality of a supremely religious, catholic, but intense reformer.

Hence, Robinson's words "more light," which he uses again and again in his writings do truly represent him. The logic of practice may have shown his successors that the Leyden pastor's dogma as well as polity was capable of illumination. That does not diminish the nobility of his parting counsel.

Robinson's strength lay in the power which he possessed to impress other men. He stands in the history of Congregationalism at a most important juncture. Out from the sphere of his influence went, on the one hand, the founder of the English Independents, and, on the other, the Pilgrim Fathers. For the first time a man had arisen, who was strong enough to control the revolutionary elements in the congregations, and shape a consistent system capable of growth and persistence. Beyond the personal influence exerted upon Jacob, we can follow no broad lines in English Independency, directly traceable to Robinson. But Plymouth bears the indelible marks of his influence. Through the Plymouth men the Puritan colonists of Massachusetts Bay were brought to embrace Separation. But the two remain distinct in spirit. Persecutions never took place in Plymouth ; they were frequent in the larger communities. This fact goes back to the teaching, practice, and spirit of the Leyden pastor.

Robert Browne was the original thinker who brought Congregational principles to some degree of formulated expression, but did great harm by his instability. Barrowe and Greenwood shaped a Presbyterian system which was neither one thing nor another, and were the martyrs of the early movement. Henry Ainsworth was a scholar and judicious organizer, but in the environment at Amsterdam could not work out the new system

successfully. John Robinson grasped the entire movement so comprehensively and was himself a man of such personal power, that he is not only the greatest of the Separatists but the virtual founder of Congregationalism.

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